

Tour Itinerary
Especially Prepared for
The Jacqueline Bibby Group
28 July – 07 August 2018

Day 01

Saturday, 28 July 2018:

Arrive King Shaka International Airport – Durban (DUR) off flight BA6215 at 11h40 ex OR Tambo International Airport – Johannesburg. On arrival, you will be met by ATM Tours for the 1-hour road transfer to Umkomaas (a corruption of the Zulu name for the river, the *Mkhomazi*, meaning place of cow whales). On arrival at Agulhas House, Umkomaas, and after checking in, you will have the rest of the day free. Overnight at Agulhas House in 5 x double rooms and 2 x single rooms, on a full board basis. Continental breakfast, hot “brunch”/ lunch after the dives and dinner.

Please note that Agulhas House is not licenced to sell liquor. Please advise us in advance of the Group’s first night’s liquor requirements, and we will arrange for Agulhas House to purchase it on their behalf.

Included:

Meet & Greet at King Shaka International Airport – Durban; road transfer to Agulhas House; dinner; accommodation at Agulhas House.

Excluded:

International and domestic air into King Shaka International Airport – Durban; breakfast; lunch; additional touring & entry fees; bar (Agulhas House is not licenced to sell liquor); items of a personal nature; gratuities.

Day’s 02

Sunday, 29 July 2018:

After an early wakeup call, at about 06h30, a light continental breakfast is served. The divers will then assemble at the dive centre, which is situated on the B&B’s property, to sign the indemnity, select dive gear, and to kit up before being transferred to the Umkomaas River lagoon to launch the “Duck” (Zodiac) for your **two scheduled reef dives** on Aliwal Shoal, weather permitting.

Please be aware that “Raggie” (Sand Tiger Shark) Season is “supposed” to be from July through to September, so it’s highly unlikely that you will encounter and “Raggies” whilst you are diving Aliwal or Protea.

All diving in South Africa is best done early in the morning, at dawn, this is when the wind and the seas tend to be calmer, making for relaxed and enjoyable diving. As the morning wears on, the winds tend to pick up, causing a chop on the water and making for unpleasant diving.

If you get bored diving Aliwal’s reefs, which I doubt, then there are two good wrecks on which to dive. Aliwal Shoal itself is a reef created out of fossilised sandstone almost 80 000 years ago. The area around the shoal consisted of sand dunes and, with heavy rains, the sand and shale dissolved forming a compound of calcium carbonate, which today forms the main body of the shoal. These reefs are covered with both soft and hard corals and have an abundance of fish life that is normally associated with coral reef diving.

Aliwal is about 2½ km’s long with a width averaging 150 meters. Depths vary from 6, to 27 meters, (19 to 88 ft.) and the shoal offers a tapestry of diversity. The Cathedral area of the reef is one of the more spectacular dives. Its inhabitants include the Ragged Tooth Shark (in season), Loggerhead Turtle, and Ribbon Tailed Rays.

In addition to the reef itself, there are also two good wrecks on which to dive. The *Produce*, an 18 000 ton Norwegian tanker that hit the Shoal and sank in 1974 and the second could be on the *Nebo*,

which struck the shoal in May 1884 and sunk almost immediately with its cargo of railway material. Both wrecks lie at approximately 30 meters and are fairly intact which makes for great wreck diving. Aliwal offers some of the best diving on the South African coastline. Water and light refreshments are provided on board the dive boat. After the second dive of the day, you will return to Agulhas House for a hot "brunch"/lunch. Rest of the day is free. Brett, the owner of Agulhas House, will be more than happy to "point you in the right direction" of the many local places of interest in and around Umkomaas. These include Croc World, Tala Game Reserve, a Durban City Tour, and a visit to uShaka Aquarium, a visit to the Natal Sharks Board, a Zulu Village Cultural Tour, or an Oribi George tour. The cost of these tours have not been included in the cost of this itinerary and would be for your own account. Overnight at Agulhas House in 5 x double rooms and 2 x single rooms, on a full board basis. Continental breakfast, hot "brunch"/lunch after the dives, and dinner.

Included:

Light continental breakfast, road transfer to the launch site, hire of tanks, weights and air; Nitrox air fills, if Nitrox certified; services of a qualified dive master, 2 x reef / "Raggie / wreck dives, weather permitting; MPA dive permit; return road transfer to Agulhas House; hot "brunch"/lunch; dinner; accommodation at Agulhas House.

Excluded:

Hire of dive equipment, other than tanks, weights & air; additional dives; night dives; additional touring & entry fees; bar (Agulhas House is not licenced to sell liquor); items of a personal nature; gratuities.

Day 03

Monday, 30 July 2018:

Today you are scheduled to do only a single "baited shark dive" on Aliwal Shoal. Please note that the DM may switch reef diving with baited shark diving, depending on dive conditions on the day. After an early morning wake-up, tea, coffee, and a light continental breakfast consisting of tea, coffee, juice, cereal, fresh fruit, yogurt, toast etc. you will assemble at the dive centre, which is on the premises. After signing the necessary indemnity forms, kitting-up, and attending the pre-dive briefing, you will be transferred to the Umkomaas River Mouth. After "another" dive briefing, you will board the "rubber duck" or Zodiac and launch, through the Umkomaas River mouth, through the breaking surf for your first mornings "Baited Shark Dive." On a Baited Shark Dive, you can expect to encounter Duskie, Black Tip Reef Shark and, if you are really lucky, a Zambezi (Bull) Shark and a Tiger Shark, depending on the time of the year, all Shark Diving on Aliwal is seasonal.

<http://www.divethebig5.co.za/shark-diving/timetable.html>

The modus operandi for a "baited shark dive" is a sub-surface, drift dive, no cage! We started the surface work a la' the Great White Shark cage diving, and it has been very successful, other than breaching we are getting all the other shark behavioral patterns that you get with the Great Whites. We launch from the Umkomaas River Mouth between 07h00 and 08h00. Once we arrive at the dive site, we start chumming, to attract the sharks, and then we put out a buoy, with the bait, which is contained in a stainless steel "box" with holes in it, so that the "smell" and oil from the sardines in the "box" permeate into the water. This is done to attract the sharks to the dive boat. When the first sharks appear, the DM assesses the situation and if he is of the opinion that the sharks are going to stay around awhile, and that they are not aggressive, the divers may enter the water. Either you can view the action from the "safety" of the boat, or for non-certified divers, get into the water with mask, snorkel, fins and a life-vest, if it makes you more at ease. The life-vest is optional. Certified divers don on full Scuba gear and drop down to anything between 5 and seven meters and follow the action from below. This is a drift dive, as the boat, chum, and bait is drifting with the wind and surface current, as are the divers below. Should the sharks disappear, the snorkelers and divers climb back onto the boat and we move to another location and start the process all over again. After about 3 hours at sea, depending on shark activity, we return to shore between 12 noon and 13h00, sometimes even later. And the most asked question!!! Why do we use a cage when diving with Great White's yet when diving with Tigers, Bull Sharks etc. we don't use a cage?? Are these Sharks not as dangerous? All wild animals in their natural environment are dangerous, but unlike Great Whites who prey on live animals, Tiger and Bull Sharks are scavengers and prefer to eat something that's already dead rather than to hunt live prey. Let's hope the Tiger Shark and Bull Shark agrees!!!

Depending on shark activity, you will return to Agulhas House at about 13h00 for a shower and a "hot brunch"/lunch. The rest of the afternoon is free. Overnight at Agulhas House in 5 x double rooms and

2 x single rooms, on a full board basis. Continental breakfast, hot “brunch”/lunch after the dives, and dinner.

Included:

Light continental breakfast; Marine Protection Agency Dive Permit (MPA Dive Permit); Morning’s “Baited Shark Dive” on Aliwal Shoal, weather permitting; hire of tanks, weights and air; Nitrox air fills, if Nitrox certified; services of a local Dive Master to lead all dives; light refreshments on board; hot “brunch”/lunch after the “Baited shark dive”; dinner; accommodation at Agulhas House.

Excluded:

Hire of dive equipment other than tanks, weights & air; additional dives; night dives; additional touring & entry fees; bar (Agulhas House is not licenced to sell liquor); items of a personal nature; gratuities.

Day 04

Tuesday, 31 July 2018:

Your second morning’s 2-tank “raggie” / reef / wreck dive on Aliwal Shoal, weather permitting.

The afternoon, after “brunch”/lunch, is free. Overnight at Agulhas House in 5 x double rooms and 2 x single rooms, on a full board basis. Continental breakfast, hot “brunch”/lunch after the dives, and dinner.

Included:

Light continental breakfast, road transfer to the launch site, hire of tanks, weights and air; Nitrox air fills, if Nitrox certified; services of a qualified dive master, 2 x reef / Raggie / wreck dives, weather permitting; MPA dive permit; return road transfer to Agulhas House; brunch/lunch; dinner; accommodation at Agulhas House.

Excluded:

Hire of dive equipment, other than tanks, weights & air; additional dives; night dives; additional touring & entry fees; bar (Agulhas House is not licenced to sell liquor); items of a personal nature; gratuities.

Day 05

Wednesday, 01 August 2018:

Your last dive on Aliwal shoal. **This will be in the form of another “baited shark dive.”** Depending on shark activity, you will return to Agulhas House at about 13h00 for a shower, a hot “brunch”/lunch, and check out. At about 15h00, you will be collected from Aliwal House, by ATM Tours for the 90-minute road transfer to Shelly Beach, Aqua Planet, and St Michaels Sand Hotel. Before going to St Michael Sands Hotel, you will stop by the Aqua Planet Dive Centre, and meet with Aqua Planets dive crew, and to select, and try on your dive gear for the following days Protea dives. We suggest that you do this immediately upon your arrival in Shelly Beach, and then it’s over and done with. As you can imagine, with a group of 9 divers, the following mornings pre-dive activities are usually hectic and rushed. After you’ve met the crew, and selected all your gear, you will then transfer the short distance to the St Michaels Sands Hotel & Timeshare Resort (St Mike’s). Overnight at the St Michaels Sands Hotel and Timeshare Resort in 5 x double & 2 x single sea-facing rooms, on a bed and breakfast basis.

Included:

Light continental breakfast; road transfer to the launch site, hire of tanks, weights, and air; Nitrox air fills, if Nitrox certified; services of a qualified dive master; morning’s ‘baited shark dive’ on Aliwal Shoal, weather permitting; MPA dive permit; return road transfer to Agulhas House; hot “brunch”/lunch; road transfer from Agulhas House – Umkomaas to St Mike’s - Shelly Beach, via Aqua Planet’s dive shop; accommodation at the St Michael Sands Hotel and Timeshare Resort.

Excluded:

Hire of dive equipment other than tanks, weights & air; additional dives; night dives; additional touring & entry fees; bar; dinner; items of a personal nature; gratuities.

Day’s 06 & 07

Thursday, 02 August & Friday, 03 August 2018:

At a time advised the previous afternoon, when you stopped by Aqua Planet’s Dive Shop, you will be collected from St Mike’s by Aqua Planet for the 10-minute road transfer to the Sonny Evans Small Craft Harbour in Shelly Beach for your **two 2-tank reef dives on Protea Banks, weather permitting.** Protea Banks is a world-renowned shark diving destination and the “target species” on Protea are Bull Shark, Tiger Shark, and Hammerhead Shark, but on Protea, anything is possible! On arrival at the

Sonny Evans Small Craft Harbour, you will kit up, have dive planning, and launch the “Duck” for the first of your two scheduled dives of the day on Protea Banks, weather permitting. **Please note that dives on Protea are restricted to advanced divers only or OW1 divers who have more than 25-logged dives. This is due to the depth of the dives, in excess of 30 meters, and the strong currents that are usually present on Protea.** This is adventure diving at its best, and well worth the effort! Our Dive Masters, who have dived Protea for years, have mastered the art of safe diving on Protea. After kitting up on the boat and doing a backward roll into the ocean, and getting the buoyancy right, the DM first descends to 5 meters and waits there, at 5 meters, until all the divers get down to him/her. Once all divers are at 5 meters, the group descends, together, to the bottom, which is at about 30 meters. Before the dive, those divers that are heavy breathers are buddie paired off together, so that when they get low on air, they surface together, as a pair. Surface interval is usually spent on the boat before commencing with the second dive. (Please don't forget to take seasick pills otherwise, this could be a very loooong surface interval time!) After the second dive, and return to shore, you will be transferred back to St Mike's. The rest of the day is then free to explore your new surrounds. Shelly Beach is quite a large holiday coastal town with many restaurants, pubs, movie houses, and shopping malls. Other attractions / activities nearby include, Pure Venom Reptile Park, Crags View Wild Care Centre, the Margate Art Museum, Uvongo River Nature Reserve, Oribi Gorge, which is a 20 km drive from Shelly Beach, The Wild Coast Casino, which is nearby, a coffee farm in the neighboring town of Ramsgate. If you are a golfer..... lots of top-class golf courses in the vicinity, surfing, fishing etc. etc. The folk at Aqua Planet or at St Mike's will be happy to point you in the right direction. Any additional dives and local touring would be for your own account. Overnight at the St Michaels Sands Hotel and Timeshare Resort (St Mike's), in 5 x double & 2 x single sea-facing rooms, on a bed and breakfast basis.

Included:

Breakfast/packed breakfast; return transfers from St Mike's to the Sonny Evans Small Craft Harbour; two guided reef dives on Protea Banks, weather permitting; services of a qualified Dive Master; hire of tanks, weights and air; light refreshments on board the dive boat; accommodation at the St Michael Sands Hotel and Timeshare Resort.

Excluded:

Hire of dive equipment other than tanks, weights & air; additional dives; additional touring & entry fees; lunch; dinner; bar; items of a personal nature; gratuities.

Day 08

Saturday, 04 August 2018:

At 06h00 the group will be collected from St Mike's for the 6-hour road transfer to Hilltop Camp in the Hluhluwe / Mfolozi Game Reserve via Lake St Lucia for a 2-hour estuary cruise. Today punctuality is important, as you need to be on the jetty, at Lake St Lucia, at 10h50 for the 2-hour estuary cruise on the Lake at 11h00. After the cruise, you need to get to Hilltop Camp in the Hluhluwe / Mfolozi Game Reserve by 15h00 to check-in. At 11h00, at Lake St Lucia, you will board *Advantage Cruiser* for the 2-hour boat cruise up the St Lucia River Estuary affording you close up sightings of hippo, crocodile, mangrove swamps, birds, and more. The main idea is that after the cruise, you leave the boat with more knowledge of the eco system, and go back home with photographs and memories of the animals that inhabit the Estuary that will last a lifetime. The boat is equipped with a fully licensed bar; tuck shop, toilets, PA system, and the popular sundeck for better viewing. The boat is built to venture into shallow waters, for those up close photos of hippo and crocodile. After the boat cruise, you will continue on to Hilltop Camp in Hluhluwe. The Hluhluwe / Mfolozi Game Reserve is the oldest game reserve in Africa, and once the private hunting ground of past Zulu Kings. The plan is to get you to Hilltop Camp by 15h00 to check-in, explore your new surroundings and to assemble at reception at 16h30 to join the afternoon safari / game drive, which departs Hilltop Reception at 17h00.

The Hluhluwe-Umfolozi Park is renowned for its wide variety of bird and animal life. Besides 'The Big Five' (lion, leopard, elephant, rhino and buffalo), the elusive cheetah, wild dogs and many other well - known Bushveld species inhabit the park, offering the visitors a rich game viewing experience. The park covers 96 000 hectares, and comprises three reserves: Hluhluwe and Umfolozi – two of Africa's oldest game reserves, both founded in 1895 – and the linking Corridor Reserve, proclaimed in 1989. Hluhluwe has the distinction of being the oldest “formally” protected area in Africa! In 1895, with about only 20 southern white rhino's surviving on earth, and these in Imfolozi, the threat to the species survival was dire, and the proclamation of the Hluhluwe / Imfolozi Game Reserves ensured their

survival. Hluhluwe / Imfolozi Game Reserves now “export” White Rhino’s to reserves all over Africa where they were originally found. A truly wonderful success story!

At 16h30 you will be introduced to your Ranger and Tracker and depart Hilltop’s reception at 17h00 for your afternoon / evening game drive (safari). The afternoon / evening game drive / safari last about 3 hours, depending on animal activity. After the game drive / safari, you will return to Hilltop Camp for dinner, which is served in the restaurant. Overnight at Hilltop Camp, in 5 double & 2 x single en suite, air-conditioned chalets, on a dinner, bed and breakfast basis.

Included:

Packed breakfast; road transfer from St Mikes – Shelly Beach to Hilltop Camp – Hluhluwe / Mfolozi Game Reserve via Lake St Lucia; 2-hour crocodile and hippo cruise on Lake St Lucia @ 11h00; KwaZulu/Natal Conservation Levy; evening safari; dinner; accommodation at Hilltop Camp.

Excluded:

Lunch; additional touring & entry fees; bar; items of a personal nature; gratuities.

Day’s 09 & 10

Sunday, 05 August and Monday, 06 August 2018:

Two full days spent on safari in Hluhluwe with KwaZulu/Natal Parks. Set your alarm clocks for a 05h00 wake up, to report to Hilltop Reception at 05h30 for a 06h00 departure, for the early morning safari. Please check departure times with reception the night before, as these change from month to month, depending on sunrise. All animal viewing is best done in the early morning and late afternoon when it’s cool. This is when the animals are more active, and easier to spot. From about 10h00 till 15h00, during the heat of the day, when it is at its hottest, the animals tend to lie in the shade, not moving, which makes for difficult viewing. Depending on animal activity, you will return to Hilltop Camp at about 09h00 for breakfast, which is served in Hilltop’s restaurant. Rest of the morning / afternoon is free to laze by the pool, spend time bird watching around camp or to just “chill.” Lunch is for your own account. At about 16h30, you will again assemble at reception to join the afternoon / evening safari. Depending on animal activity, you will return to camp at about 20h00 for dinner. Overnight at Hilltop Camp, in 5 double & 2 x single en suite, air-conditioned chalets, on a dinner, bed and breakfast basis.

Included:

Early morning game drive / safari; breakfast; afternoon / evening safari; KwaZulu/Natal Park and Conservation levy’s; accommodation at Hilltop Camp.

Excluded:

Lunch; additional game / nature activities; additional touring & entry fees; bar; items of a personal nature; gratuities.

Day 11

Tuesday, 07 August 2018:

Another early morning for your last safari in Africa! After the safari, you will return to Hilltop Camp for breakfast. At 12h00 you will be collected from Hilltop Camp (Reception) by ATM Tours for the 232 km or 4-hour road and transfer back to King Shaka International Airport – Durban, to connect with flight BA6212 departing at 17h25 to OR Tambo International Airport – Johannesburg. Check-in is at 16h25. End of services.

Included:

Early morning safari; breakfast; road transfer from Hilltop Camp – Hluhluwe to King Shaka International Airport – Durban.

Excluded:

Additional touring & entry fees; lunch; dinner; accommodation; on-ward flights; bar; items of a personal nature; gratuities.

Please note: Hluhluwe / iMfolozi falls within a “low-risk” Malaria area. To be safe, we strongly suggest that you consult your Doctor for advice on taking prophylactics before entering a “low risk” Malaria area.